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To: Honker, William;Brown, James;Dellinger, Philip;Mike Frazier;Graves, Brian
Subject: FW: Our View: Life is good if EPA, Railroad Commission play well together

FYI

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Subject: Our View: Life is good if EPA, Railroad Commission play well together

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Our View: Life is good if EPA, Railroad Commission play well together

Midland Reporter-Telegram | Posted: Thursday, September 25, 2014 1:35 pm

The headline in Wednesday's Reporter-Telegram probably caught some people by surprise: "EPA backs Texas disposal well plan."

The Texas Tribune story indicated praise by the Environmental Protection Agency over a "Railroad Commission proposal aimed at curbing earthquakes possibly triggered by the high-pressure injection of oil and gas waste into wells that plummet thousands of feet below ground."

When we saw the Tribune story we admit that our first thought was, "What did someone do with our friends in Washington?"

No, this proposal support isn't a joke, and we are glad to see it. The Tribune article talks about an effort between the two groups to "not be adversarial." We appreciate that. We know what the oil and gas industry means to the state, and having the RRC or state leaders always at odds with the EPA or another federal office is counterproductive.

The article mentioned that Texas Attorney General Greg Abbott has sued the EPA 19 times, including a number of lawsuits involving the Railroad Commission. The RRC and EPA have also battled in the past over groundwater contamination, according to the article.

We don't expect there will be a day when the EPA and federal government won't be the proverbial political punching bag for Texas leaders. It's too easy to attack Washington when they are listing an animal such as the lesser prairie chicken for reasons that have little to do with science or even common sense.

In the article, it mentions that RRC Executive Director Milton Rister applauded Ron Curry, the EPA administrator for Region 6, for trying to bring the agencies closer. Still, being a little skeptical, we would tell Rister not to say too much, or Washington -- and certainly the current administration -- will replace Curry because of such praise.

"Since he's taken over as leader, he's reached out to Texas, and I'm pretty sure to the other states, to try to make sure we have open communication, and we've reciprocated," Rister said. "We'll leave the fighting to the bosses."

There will always be something to fight about. If it's not the EPA or Department of Fish and Wildlife, someone will come forward and regulate or sue to make life harder for those in the energy business, or at least it feels that way.

But on this day, let's celebrate a positive step. The EPA and RRC come across as "allies" on an issue. It might be a baby step to some, but at least, it appears to be a step forward.

Regards,

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